

Global Assessment of Individual Needs "GAIN"

By Kathy Skippen

Senate Concurrent Resolution 109, passed by the 2007 Idaho Legislature, mandated that the Department of Health and Welfare, the Department of Correction, the Department of Juvenile Corrections and the courts collaborate to develop and adopt a standard statewide assessment tool for substance abuse by January 1, 2008. That has been done and much more.

The Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) has been chosen to be the Idaho substance use disorder assessment tool and the process is being put in place to make its use the driver of a more focused and data-driven substance abuse prevention and treatment system for the state. To date, 487 people have been trained to administer the GAIN. Thirty one of these people are in the process to become Local Trainers, certified by Chestnut, the company that developed the tool. This group of trainers will allow Idaho to continue to build the base of individuals who will be needed to give substance use disorder assessments for Idaho.

It was decided early on that Idaho would move forward with a robust certification and quality assurance process for those individuals who will be doing assessments to assure that the data collected in these assessment would be valid. The goal is have reliable information on the need for services both from a client perspective and from that of those who are creating and maintaining the treatment system. It will also show what is working and what isn't, providing for the ability to hold the treatment system accountable for outcomes.

Because the GAIN tool is web-based and will be accessed through the client-management system WITS, it will be easily used from anywhere in the state. Judges anywhere in Idaho will now have the ability to get a uniform substance use disorder assessment report providing them with the information needed to make decisions regarding the level of treatment that may be needed by someone in their courts. Providing this treatment information will give Idaho the opportunity to direct individuals to treatment rather than incarceration. Reducing the number of people being incarcerated in Idaho prisons is one of the driving factors for moving to a more robust assessment and treatment system in the state.

With proper release of information, assessment data for an individual will be easily transmitted to those who need it to provide the appropriate level of placement into treatment. It will enhance the ability for those working with an individual to have accurate and timely information for proper planning for that treatment. Because all agencies who provide services to individuals for

substance use disorder are now working closely together, both in the design of this system and for the smooth transition of individual clients the system will be more seamless than anyone could have predicted just a year ago.

From the perspective of an IT geek where we are headed will be most appreciated. GAIN is a web-based data management system which allows for a GAIN Q to be done by one interviewer, data transferred to a treatment program and a new interviewer at that agency to then download that information into the full GAIN I and then complete the assessment. The GAIN assessment will be accessed through a client management system called WITS. This system will allow a staff person to enter client information, client-related contacts, releases, referrals and link to the GAIN assessment for example. The WITS system will also allow ODP to track when a person is trained to use the GAIN, when they reach certification and when they are due to have a quality assurance review.

Because of the relationships that have been forged among the ICSA agencies all substance abuse services are now being seen with fresh eyes. The RFP that was released December 3rd by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare for the Management Services Contract was a collaborative effort of a sub-committee of ICSA. A group meets every other week to review substance abuse treatment services being provided currently and at every meeting issues come up that can be addressed on the spot that were simply not being addressed previously. Transitional housing for juveniles, priority populations for treatment, joint contracting for services, double billing and treatment prior to sentencing are all issues that have been dealt with in a timely manner because the right people are now at the table to not only make the decisions but do the work to see that changes happen.